

CHAPTER 5

SETTING AND VALIDATING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance standards define expectations for student performance on Kentucky's Core Content Test. The history of standard setting in Kentucky can be briefly told. The KIRIS performance standards were originally set in 1992 by a relatively small group of Kentucky teachers assisted procedurally Kentucky Department of Education staff and assessment contractor staff under a short time frame in order to be ready to evaluate the first administration of the KIRIS test. Formal definitions of the standards evolved informally as scoring guides were written and work was evaluated during Accountability Cycle 1.

Concern over the small group that initially set standards, and the lack of adequate documentation of the standard setting process, led to a call by the Office of Education Accountability to the Kentucky General Assembly for a resetting of the standards. Under the guidance of the National Technical Work Group a series of three standard validation processes were undertaken during Accountability Cycle 2. Following a move of the Mathematics Portfolio from grade 4 to grade 5 in 1995, the standards were reset during the summer and fall of 1995. This process was described in the *KIRIS Accountability Cycle 2 Technical Manual*, Chapter 5. Since the Mathematics Portfolio was removed from the accountability system for Accountability Cycle 3, further discussion of that standard setting study is unnecessary in this Technical Report. A complete description is available in the *KIRIS Accountability Cycle 2 Technical Manual*, Chapter 5.

A second important standards validation project was completed following testing in 1995. Over three hundred Kentuckians were involved in a two-month effort to determine the quality of the previous standards and recommend changes. Changes were made to the Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, and Distinguished descriptors. The essential validity of the original standards was affirmed by over 75 percent of the participants for most subjects and grade levels. A significant minority of approximately 20 percent believed the standards should be higher and about 5 percent believed they should be lower. Different affiliation groups did not differ significantly in their opinions of the standards. Judges who were not aware of the prior scores of the items tended to express a need for raising standards more than judges who knew the prior scores. A complete description with the statistical results is available in the *KIRIS Accountability Cycle 2 Technical Manual*, Chapter 5, and in the *KIRIS Standards Validation Study: Mathematics, Reading, Science & Social Studies*, Advanced Systems in Measurement and Evaluation, Inc., May 15, 1996.

A third study involving the setting of standards related to the initial setting of benchmarks for Arts & Humanities and Practical Living/Vocational Studies. This study occurred concurrently with the previous validation project, with over 100 Kentuckians

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participating. This study is also described, with statistical results, in the *KIRIS Accountability Cycle 2 Technical Manual*, Chapter 5 and the KDE Occasional Paper Series # LRS96-4, entitled *KIRIS Standards Setting Study: Arts & Humanities, Practical Living/Vocational Studies*, Advanced Systems in Measurement and Evaluation, Inc, October 18, 1996.

Following these studies in 1995 the performance standards for the assessment of Kentucky students remained stable from 1992 to 1998. The focus was upon assisting teachers in successfully aligning their instruction with Kentucky's *Core Content for Assessment* and the assessment instrument so the delivery of instruction would be more congruent with the assessment experience.